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Ways & Sounds
Inquiries. Interconnections. Contours.
by patrick brennan



Essays reimagining a language for talking about music

New York, NY, June 2021: What transforms sounds into music? What does it mean to compose from the inside out or the outside in? Do recordings reshape our conceptions? In this series of essays, New York composer & musician partrick brennan probes a more inclusive, non-centricized, relational framework for understanding various ecologies of composing — and, most compellingly, how can we, as listeners, listen?

Ways & Sounds is a book that will reward repeated readings; it belongs in the permanent library of anyone thinking seriously about the possibilities of musical practice. In a provocative opening move, brennan deflects the question—common not only to improvised music but to much contemporary composed music as well—of whether or not a given piece or type of music is structured. The question for brennan is one of “whether” rather than “if,” and so his question becomes one of what kind of structure the music exhibits. As he points out, musical structure encompasses not only the relationships between the musical materials internal to the work or the performance, but the human relationships—cooperative, conflicting, communicative—defining the interactions of the individuals generating the sounds.

—Daniel Barbiero, *Avant Music News*, June 28, 2021

What we have here is a rumination on the construction of music, what it is, what it means, how it's made, how one interacts with it either from the perspective of a listener, musician, or composer. brennan clearly and precisely articulates his thoughts on the topic. Be warned, these are not breezy aphorisms, brennan has thought deeply about the topics, has done his research, deftly quotes what prominent voices have said in the past, and explains his thinking behind what music is and means. There is a lot to take in and think about, from the personal meaning of music to the invisible dynamics of what drives attitudes to music.

— Paul Acquaro The Free Jazz Collective

patrick brennan has been actively engaging the challenges of original music as composer, bandleader and saxophonist since he formed his ensemble s0nic Openings in 1979. He's pursued a contrarian and independent musical path toward evolving a distinct musical language in relation with the Blues Continuum. brennan has performed and recorded his own music in settings from solo to large formats and has collaborated with the Moroccan Gnawa as well as with electro-acoustic improvisers.

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patrick brennan is available for interviews & public speaking engagements.